



Karen's Chronicles: Prodigal Grace

"There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.' So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had."

~ Jesus, Luke 15:11-13 *The*

Message

Our focus this Lenten Season is Jesus' story of the son who is lost and found, the son who stays and distances, and the father who loves them both. I invite you to read this story in a variety of versions of the Gospel. Above is Eugene Peterson's *The Message* version of the start of the story.

Many faith families know this story as "The Prodigal Son," which is one way to describe behaviors toward material assets that are wasteful or careless. I do not hear the word "prodigal" in daily conversation. While it may refer to the younger son as he squanders all the property his father gives him, the story can also be called "The Prodigal Father."

Prodigal means extravagant, lavish, generous. The father relates with the two sons graciously. He forgives both, even as the older son shows an attitude that is the opposite of prodigal – resentful and defiant.

The father is prodigal with both property and grace. He takes the initiative to restore his relationship with both sons. When everyone on the homeplace is singing and dancing, the prodigal father encourages the older son to join the celebration. What do you think? Will the older son release his resentment and rejoice with the community?

Each one of us may have a different ending for the story, as well as a different view of the three people in the family. Where does your life's journey intersect with the journey these three share? Where do you see yourself in our faith family? How have you experienced Jesus' saving love as he prodigally gives himself away?

May we all rest in God's grace as the Spirit sparks our imagination this Lent.

With appreciation,

Pastor Karen



From the Education Committee:

Though the temperatures are still saying "Winter," the longer amount of daylight, and periodic sunshine are promising good things coming!

Sunday School and Youth activities are continuing weekly, focusing on learning and sharing God's Word and Work in the world. Studies have included looking at some of the events Jesus experienced during His life, including His Baptism, temptation in the desert, times in the Synagogue, and His many instances of healing others. Recent special activities included a weekend "Lock In" for older youth, creating Valentines to share with others in the congregation, decorating Valentine cookies, and sending surprise boxes to Epworth young

Names and contact information are continuing to be collected for Early Reader Bibles, Graduating High School Seniors, and Confirmation Class. Other plans are also beginning for Palm Sunday (including a Sunday School skit!), Easter activities (including Egg Hunts, with prizes and treats), Vacation Bible School (VBS, with a suggested date the week of June 13th, from 9-11), Mother's Day (May 8th), and Father's Day (June 19).

Our thanks to all of our Epworth family for their continued support of our children and youth, the special Valentines, birthday cards, notes and contacts that are made. Through your outreach, our children and youth can truly know, experience, and share God's love.

From Smith Memorial Day Care Center– Tammy Braseth, Director

February went so fast. We had Groundhogs Day, Valentines Day and Presidents Day to celebrate and learn about.

Coming in March we will celebrate Dr Seuss's Birthday with lots of fun books and activities along with St Patrick's Day.

Spring Break is March 21-26. We are open but will be low on kids due to the schools closing.

Thank you to whoever put away the nativity set outside and thank you for hiring someone to shovel the sidewalks.

Countless children and families within our community have been fortunate to have been greeted by Tammy each morning when they arrive at Smith Memorial. One of the greatest gifts Tammy has brought to our daycare for 40 years (29 as director) has been her love for all children. She remembers every child who has gone through this daycare and grown children come back to see her because of these special memories. With her retirement, the daycare board must start looking for a new director but there can never be another with a heart as large as Tammy Braseth. Thank you for all you've done for Smith Memorial. and our Epworth Family!



Lay Servant Ministries Training

We Are United Methodists

An Interactive Exploration of the Heritage of The United Methodist Church

6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m. Friday, April 22, 2022
+ 10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. Saturday, April 23, 2022

At Lakeside Community Chapel's Gathering Place
236 Adams St, Lakeside MT 59922

Using a timeline, skits, a puzzle, a flow chart, and other learning aids, this course provides an opportunity for participants to work with others to explore the people, events, and situations that facilitated the formation, separation and reuniting of legacy churches that eventually came together to become The United Methodist Church. The course also explores elements of the UMC, such as three forms of grace, the means of grace, the Wesley Quadrilateral and more. Major United Methodist beliefs and church structure will be examined and discussed. The course closes with an overview of the UMC's current situation, possible outcomes, and an opportunity to pray for The United Methodist Church and all the people that are and will be involved in seeking God's will for the future of the UMC.

This course was approved by the legacy Rocky Mountain Annual Conference as an advanced course or continuing education course for Certified Lay Servants, a "heritage course" option for Certified Lay Speakers, and to be used as a continuing education course option for Certified Lay Ministers.

We Are United Methodists is open to anyone, but is limited to 24 participants.

Instructor:

Gene Haning, CLM

Cost:

There is no charge for the course, but a love offering will be taken to cover meals, snacks, printing, and incidental expenses.

Book:

A PDF copy of *We Are United Methodists ~ An Interactive Exploration of the Heritage of The United Methodist Church* will be sent to registered participants in the course.

Register at:

LayServantTraining.org

For more information or questions, please contact Gene at (719) 588-7627 or gene@trinityism.org.

<https://www.layservantraining.org/MethodistRegistration.html>

Notes from United Methodist Women



A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial

Is a special program of the United Methodist Women. The focus this year is Love, Justice and Service: Answering the call. Please join us for our UMW general meeting and this program following the church service at approximately 11:00 am on March 6 in the Cameron Room. Refreshments will be served. All women are encouraged to attend.

UMW Book Club: Epworth's UMW supports the UMW Reading Program by reading a book from the Reading Program and meeting to discuss the book, on a monthly basis. Some books are available from the local library. If not available, we purchase one or two copies for members to read. For example, in February, we read the book "Leading While Muslim". In March, we are reading Melinda Gates' book, "The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World". Here is a description of the book: For the past twenty years, Melinda Gates has been on a mission to find solutions for people with the most urgent needs, wherever they live. One thing that's become increasingly clear to her:

If you want to lift a society up, you need to stop keeping women down. Her unforgettable narrative about the inspiring people she's met during her travels around the world is backed by startling data on

issues that need our attention—from child marriage to lack of access to contraceptives to gender equity in the workplace.

If you wish to join us, please let Janet Ulrich know so we can get a copy of the book to you!

Did you know Methodist women can be UMW members either as a part of a circle or as a member at large? In the future, there will be an online membership available to those who want to be a part of this dynamic organization but are unable to participate in person for any reason.

UMW Pledge to Mission: United Methodist Women is trusted with pledges and donations from individual members and local member organizations, as well as mission partners and anonymous donors who have a heart for mission. We support programs in the United States and around the world that benefit women, children and youth - thereby impacting entire communities. As an agency of The United Methodist Church, United Methodist Women abides by the Social Principles and Discipline as determined by General Conference, giving only to projects in accordance with those guidelines.

Through their generosity, United Methodist Women members transform the lives of women, youth, and children in the United

States and around the world.

United Methodist Women's Mission Giving – which is unrestricted funds – supports the total program of the organization.

The Epworth UMW has pledge cards for making an annual Pledge to Mission. Each circle chair has these forms. If you are an at large member, pledge forms are available in the UMW mailbox, or from our treasurer, Janet Ulrich.

Paper Shredding

The NW Veterans Pantry is now offering the service of shredding paper materials at their place of business located at 1349 Highway 2 East. This year, 2022, paper shredding will occur on April 16th, from 10:00 to 12:00 AM and from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. You can shred up to 4 copy paper boxes.

Thank you Epworth UMC, for giving generously of yourselves.

January-2022

Income	17,073
Expenses	23,923
Loss	(6850)

Our insurance and taxes were paid in full for the year (a total of \$8,602) which is the reason for a deficit to start the year. We will be able to reduce this negative report over the next few months.

The long-term Trustees Emergency Fund has \$49,550.00. Finance Committee will be working with Trustees once a bid is received regarding the step project.

Lew Savik, Finance Chair

Make a Reservation

You are invited to reserve a Sunday to be an Epworth Greeter. What an opportunity to welcome each person, introduce yourself, and show God's love to all. Contact Worship Committee Chair Deb Sapp 756-7937 or robert285@centurytel.net

Mountain Sky United Methodist Women
Spiritual Life Retreat



Presents:

*Where Will You Flourish
in this Foolish World ?*

Date and Time:

Friday, April 1, 6:00pm to 8:00pm
Saturday, April 2, 8:30am to 3:30pm

Study Leaders:

Dr. Tim and Shirley Roehl

Join on a virtual (Zoom) journey of discovery
to find a path you can follow in our foolish world.

A path where you best fit and flourish.

A path where you make a difference in the lives of others.

A path to clarity when God guides your direction and destiny.

A path blending seven ways of looking at your life.

A path to nourish your heart.

Registration: Please register at mtnskyumw.org website. Form available soon.
For additional information, contact Lora Fulton, 1710 Dogwood Court, Broomfield. Co 80020
Or email Lora Fulton at muscumwregistrar@gmail.com

For more information about Tim's ministry, writing and resources go to www.FitFlourish.com. Also his book "Fit and Flourish: Discover How God Created You to Make a Difference" (personal journal/group study edition) is available for purchase on Amazon.com.

Dr. Tim Roehl has coached and equipped leaders from over 75 nations as a pastor, church planter, missionary, author, and trainer.



Church Council Minutes — February 21, 2022

Gary Freebury opened the meeting with prayer.

Reports:

Trustees

Jerry Scott reported that Sandon Construction has committed to finishing the steps but has not submitted a bid. A light in the parking lot must be repaired. The estimate is \$950. The repair must comply with Dark Skies standards. A Round-Up-for Safety grant will be applied for to help with cost. Sprinkler lines need to be replaced.

Day Care

Tammy Braseth, Daycare Director, officially submitted her retirement as of August 31, 2022. Nila Lauder, Day Care Board Chairman, stated that a search has begun for Tammy's replacement.

Finance

Lew Savik reported income for January 2022 to be \$17,073 with expenses of \$23,923. There is a \$6850 deficit because insurance and taxes (\$8602) were paid in full for 2022.

Carol Fontaine reported that audits have been done.

Missions

Laverne Scott stated that the committee has met with Valley Neighbors, which support legal refugees' settlement in the valley. The committee plans to have the presentation made for the entire church.

Feeding the Flathead will prepare a sit-down meal for March 19. They will plan for more meals to be served than before, since some of the people displaced from the Fairbridge Inn are at Samaritan House.

The committee completed the Volunteer Engagement Report. 725 people that they know about have been helped by 85 Epworth members who volunteer at church and in the community. Money is being sent to the Blackfeet Parish to help repair the church roof and to Samaritan House.

Worship

Deb Sapp asked for greeters to sign up. March 6 will be communion with pre-packaged elements to be picked up at the end of the service. Preparations are being made for events during Lent. Deb had a request from the Worship Committee that at every Ad Council meeting each committee would be given their current account balance so they can stay within budget.

UMW

Robin Krogstad reported that UMW hosted a coffee time on February 13. The annual Prayer and Self Denial program will be held on March 6 after the church service.

Sunday School

Carmen Field reported that VBS will be the week of June 22 with the theme "Knights of North Castle". Study Bibles have been ordered for the three graduating seniors. Dawn has been doing music with the Sunday School. The last day of Sunday School will be May 22. Pat Freebury sent 45 Valentines to the kids, youth and college students

SPRC

Cynthia Thorsen said the group has discussed a procedural booklet for the church secretary.

The committee developed and approved a staff evaluation. Diane is in the office Monday through Thursday from 9 to 1. Everyone is invited to stop in and greet her.

Youth

Cynthia reported that twelve youth and five adults went night skiing. The next outing will be bowling. Pastor Karen and Dawn will be invited. Confirmation will be next year so there will be two more students, and they will have more opportunity to build relationships with Pastor Karen. The youth will have a part in the Palm Sunday service.

Tech

Cynthia will request funds from the Memorial Committee to replace the wireless mikes currently being used in the sanctuary. The ones presently being used will be used in the basement. Pastor Karen, Jana Warnell, Chuck Cummings, and Cynthia will write the proposal. Headphones for the hard-of-hearing are still in the works.

Music

Dawn said choir is doing well. They are standing in front of the altar to encourage congregational singing. There was a comment that having a song leader helped the congregational singing.

Membership/Lay Visitation

Janet Ulrich reported Valentines and "Upper Rooms" were distributed. The last week of Mission U is Sunday, February 27. There will be a Spiritual Life Retreat in April. The next book for the UMW Book Club will be *Moment of Lift* by Melinda Gates. Let Janet know if you would like to join the ZOOM Book Club.

Dean Robbins commented that the microphone emergency on Sunday was handled well.

Jean Davis encouraged everyone to participate in the short Prayer and Self-Denial program on March 6.

Sharon Young thanked Cynthia for reporting for SPRC since she was ill when they met.

Pastor Karen asked for comments.

Cynthia Thorsen has noticed a greater feeling of family in the church. Carol Fontaine commented on the hard work the Trustees have put in. Also, the church family has given very generously for these expensive projects. Robin Krogstad values the inter-generational activities.

Pastor Karen asked the members to give themselves gratitude for valuing relationships in the church family and for creating space for people who want to become part of our faith community.

Lew Savik moved that the budget for 2022 be approved. The motion was seconded by Cynthia Thorsen and carried.

Janet Ulrich asked about the need to replace the roof. Jerry Scott stated that it is not necessary at this time.

Pastor Karen closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Highbarger, Secretary

From the Worship Committee:

WHY ASHES?

United Methodists first adopted an official ritual for Ash Wednesday that involves the use of ashes in the 1992 Book of Worship. Prior to that time, Methodists either had no official service at all for this day (through 1964) or an “ashless” Ash Wednesday Service (1965 Book of Worship). The use of ashes remains optional in the current Book of Worship, and, indeed, in all rites for this day.

In many churches the ashes are made by burning the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday.

As the ashes are placed on the forehead, words such as these are spoken: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return,"

From Missions Team:

Epworth is answering the request to support both the Blackfeet United Methodist Parish and Kalispell's Samaritan House. A recent windstorm caused major damage to the Methodist Church in Browning, and Samaritan house here in Kalispell is asking for support as they accommodate those displaced from housing in the old Outlaw Inn. Epworth Mission's budget has funds earmarked for both of these locations and it will be sent now to help support the recent requests.

The palms waved the previous Palm Sunday to welcome Jesus as our King, are burned to form the ashes. In a sense, they serve as a reminder of how far we fall short of living up to the glory of Christ.

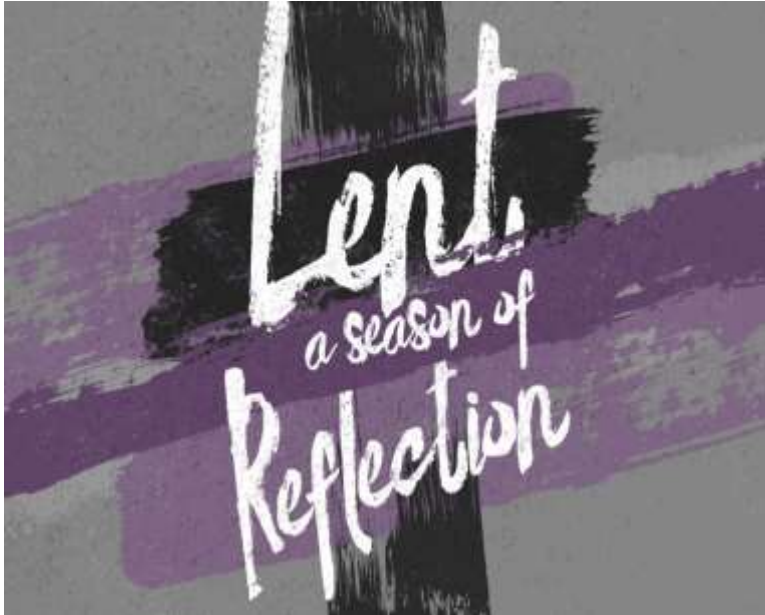
...and believe the gospel

While this all may sound fatalistic, it is not the end of the story. Lent leads to Easter, the day we celebrate that though our bodies are temporary, and our lives are flawed, a day of resurrection will come when we live in the presence of God forever.

One Wednesday every year we worship to remember who we are, and hopeful of who we can be.

If you would like to help, you may contribute through the church by putting a notation on the memo line of your check.





Just as we set aside time to spiritually prepare for Christmas Day, it makes sense to set aside time to prepare for the two most important days of the Christian year - Good Friday and Easter. Lent is a time to open the doors of our hearts a little wider and understand our Lord a little deeper, so that when Good Friday and eventually Easter comes, it is not just another day at church but an opportunity to receive the overflowing of graces God has to offer.

Meaning of Lent

Lent is meant to be a time of repentance. This time of preparation for the Grace of Easter morning is a journey of 40 days, plus each Sunday during Lent that can be called "Little Easters". How do we walk this journey?

Partner with other Christians. Historically, entire church congregations would support one another during Lent. Devoted friends

encourage each other to be specific in their prayers and help one another seek Christ's strength.

Epworth invites each of you to walk together as we host Wednesday Christian Conversations on March 30, April 6, and April 13 at 6 pm in the Cameron Room.



Flower Fund:

A \$10.00 contribution "In honor of" will help cover the cost of the carnations, flowering plants and lilies at Easter. Watch for information in the Sunday bulletins.

